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ABSTRACT

The Minnesota YouthBuild Program enables at-risk youth to gain useful job skills while working towards their high school diploma or GED. The program also provides affordable housing to battered women and children and very low income persons. The 226 youth participating in the program in 1994 were aged 16 to 24 and categorized as at-risk persons. The program's objectives are: (1) to increase education and basic skills of at-risk youth; (2) to increase the employability skills of at-risk youth; (3) to provide leadership opportunities for at-risk youth; and (4) to increase affordable housing in Minnesota. The outcomes of the program were positive. During 1994, 84 percent of all participants successfully completed the program and 60 percent found jobs. Sixty-five percent of participants completed their high school education or received their GED; of these, half went on to post secondary institutions. In the classroom, students averaged a 90 percent or better attendance rate. Other participant gains included increases in: (1) self-esteem; (2) leadership development; and (3) reductions in negative behaviors and attitudes. (SR)

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1994

MINNESOTA

YOUTHBUILD

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Prepared by the Minnesota Department of Economic Security
Community-Based Services Division/Youth Programs
January 1995

In Accordance with Minnesota Statutes 268.362 to 268.367

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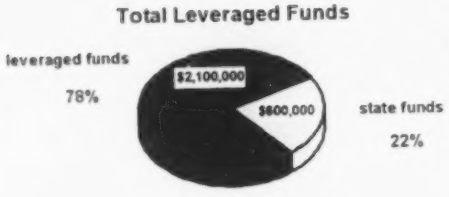
The Minnesota YouthBuild Program demonstrates a commitment to Minnesota's at-risk youth and their communities by helping young people rebuild their neighborhoods and take charge of their lives.

The program enables young people to gain useful job skills while working toward their high school diploma or GED, play a respected role in their community, and build the most essential commodity needed by their families and neighbors: safe, affordable housing.

Funding and Quality Standards

At the state level, the YouthBuild Program is an integral part of the employment and training programs in the Community Based Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Economic Security. These programs are specifically designed to reduce unemployment and poverty in Minnesota and promote economic self-sufficiency.



In 1993, the Legislature provided $600,000 in YouthBuild funds to the Department of Economic Security which awarded grants to Bi-County CAP in Bemidji; The City, Inc. in Minneapolis; Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative in Chaska; Two or More, Inc. in Minneapolis; City Academy in St. Paul; and Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. in Detroit Lakes.

The program demonstrates substantial leveraging of additional matching funds through its coordination with local community, housing, and educational agencies, technical colleges, trade unions, court services and law enforcement agencies, and drug treatment and prevention programs. Matching funds leveraged for the program totalled over $2 million in 1994.

To ensure quality standards and compliance with state statutes and labor laws, representatives of the Department of Economic Security make regular site visits to monitor the programs and provide technical assistance.

"The students are gaining in experience as leaders on the job site. They are physically and mentally using their skills."
- Bill Strader, instructor

In accordance with M.S. 3.197, the cost of preparing this report was $450.

Crime Prevention Focus

The Minnesota YouthBuild program specifically targets youth involved with the criminal justice system and those involved in gangs, with 65 percent of program participants previously involved with the criminal justice system or gangs.

Strict standards are required. Two or More's program requires youth to refrain from all criminal activity and gang involvement while enrolled in the program, including drug and alcohol use. Two or More, Inc. also requires strict tenant screening and standards to reduce and eliminate drug dealing and criminal activity on all housing projects.

"As the construction supervisor, it's very rewarding to watch the students gain knowledge and pride in the work that they do."- Gary Dohse, instructor

"Each of us is individually responsible to the whole group."
- Akeem Pendleton and Robert Harvey

Community Service Focus

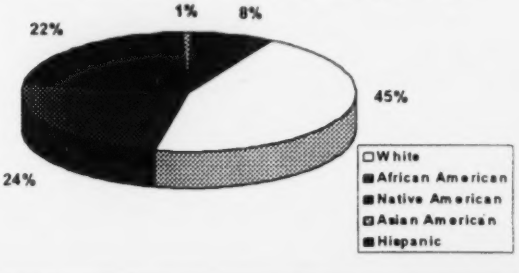
The Minnesota YouthBuild Program is an excellent model of youth community service. Meaningful and necessary community service is accomplished through the rebuilding of neighborhoods and the acquisition of affordable housing for homeless, battered, and very low income families and individuals.

The program builds self esteem and leadership skills in at-risk youth. Participants are represented on program advisory boards, make presentations to local government officials, and are involved in the planning, decision making, and evaluation of the program.

Program Description

The Minnesota YouthBuild Program served 226 young people during the past year and is expected to serve over 250 during 1995. Approximatley 150 homeless, battered women and children, and very low income persons were provided affordable housing in 1994.

Participant Race or Ethnic Characteristics



All youth participants are 16 to 24, economically disadvantaged or eligible for the High School Graduation Incentives Program, and have previously dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of school. Last year, approximately 70 percent of the youth served have left or been expelled from school, 65 percent have had involvement with the juvenile justice system, 20 percent are teen parents, 54 percent have emotional/behavioral or learning disabilities, two thirds come from single parent families, and three quarters are economically disadvantaged. Over half of the participants are youth of color. The estimated program cost is $1,200 per participant.

"The work we do makes us feel proud, positive, and helpful." - Robert Harvey

Program Objectives

The objectives of the Minnesota YouthBuild Program are four-fold:

(1) Increase education and basic skills of at-risk youth:

- Improve basic academic performance and high school attendance
- Increase high school and GED graduation rates
- Increase enrollment of at-risk youth in post-secondary and technical institutions

(2) Increase the employability skills of at-risk youth:

- Increase job readiness and work maturity skills
- Increase specialized job skills in construction/building trades for hard to employ youth
- Increase job placement for young persons in the building trades and related fields

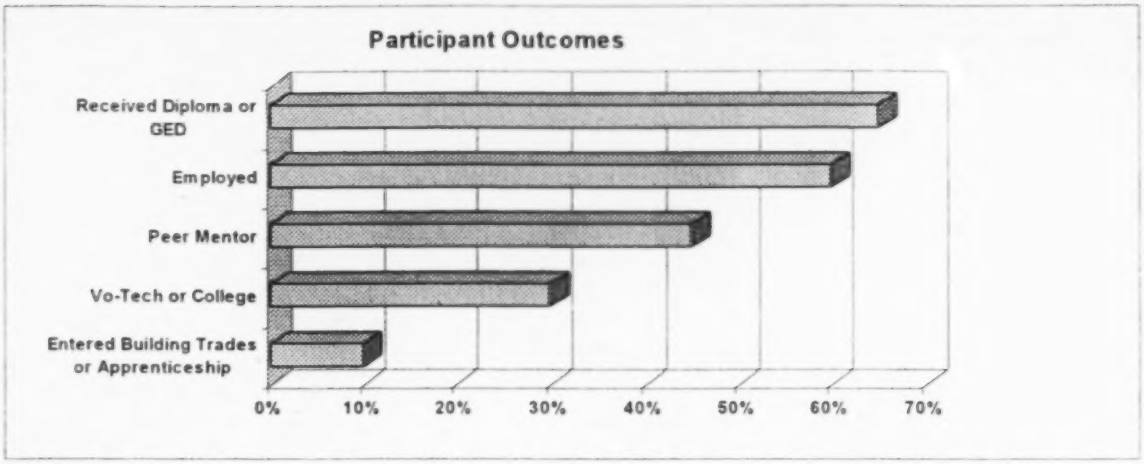
(3) Provide leadership opportunities for at-risk youth:

- Develop self-esteem, respect, and personal empowerment
- Enhance citizenship, decision making, problem solving, and negotiating skills
- Develop peer mentoring in youth
- Reduce juvenile crime and other negative behaviors

(4) Increase affordable housing in Minnesota:

- Increase affordable housing for homeless, battered, and poor families or individuals
- Rebuild deteriorating communities and neighborhoods

"This program is an investment in my future." - Yohance Moore



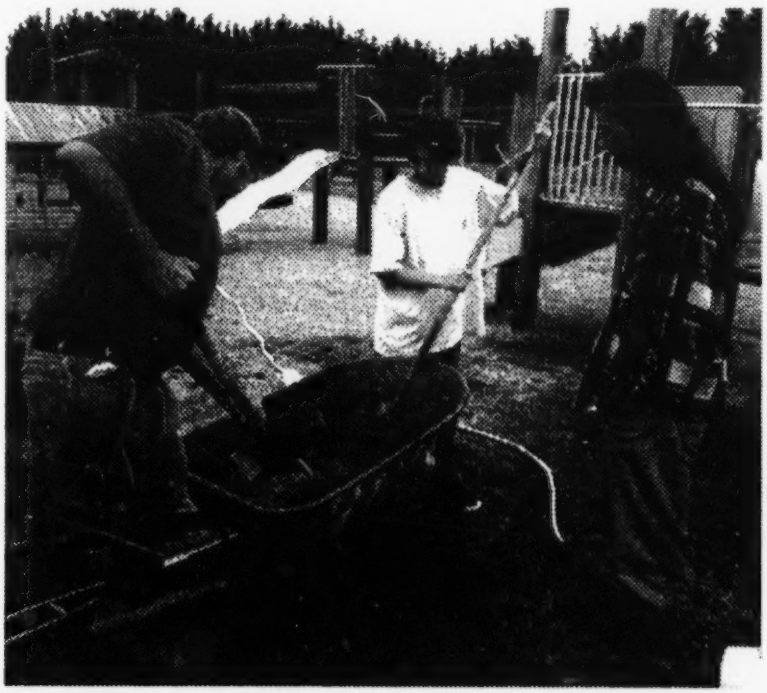
Program Outcomes

During 1994, 84 percent of all participants successfully completed the program and sixty percent found jobs. Recent follow up data indicates that an average of sixty-five percent of participants completed their high school education or received their GED. Of these, 50 percent went on to post secondary institutions.

In the classroom, students averaged 90 percent or better attendance. Twenty-two students became peer mentors for first time youth entering the program. Upon completion, 55 participants were employed with wages averaging $7.00 an hour.

Other participant gains included increases in self-esteem, leadership development, and reductions in negative behaviors and attitudes.

"Watching these young people work is great. Their growth in self-esteem is one of the best parts of the program."
-Dave Kinney, instructor



BI-COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL (BI-CAP)
BEMIDJI, MN

Bi-CAP, Inc., a private non-profit corporation serving the areas of Beltrami and Cass counties, operates the Minnesota YouthBuild Program in collaboration with Rural MN CEP Inc., Cass Lake Area Learning Center, Bemidji Area Learning Center, and the Bemidji School District. The project leveraged $900,000 in private, public, and nonprofit funds, including a federal YouthBuild grant from HUD, to match the $146,666 grant it received from the Department of Economic Security. Bi-CAP operated the pilot phase of the YouthBuild Program in 1989 which received the Minnesota Community Action Association's "Excellence Award".

EDUCATION

Each student spends approximately four hours each day in the classroom receiving individualized instruction. The curriculum includes English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Health/Physical Education, Independent Living Skills and World of Work Training. Academic credit is earned for every 120 hours of instruction or successful completion of individualized learning packages.

WORK EXPERIENCE

The work experience component is two-tiered. Tier One allows young persons to earn academic credit through vocational or Technical College courses and through World of Work seminars emphasizing job readiness skills. Tier Two provides up to two elective credits for work experience in the building trades industry. A certified vocational instructor supervises two crews of youth. Participants are paid $4.25 an hour for 25 hours a week of construction site training during the year.

LEADERSHIP/SUPPORTSERVICES

Youth and their parents are represented on the Project Advisory Committee which reviews students' progress, evaluates program outcomes, and encourages continuing parental involvement. A self-sufficiency case manager meets with youth every week to assist them on their Individual Transition to Employment Plans and to discuss any concerns they may have. Each participant is allotted approximately $150 to provide for child care, clothing, transportation, housing, food, and medical services.

HOUSING

During 1994, three single family homes were rehabilitated in Cass Lake and Walker to house homeless families in Cass county area. Two other properties have been purchased and are expected to be renovated during the first half of 1995.

THE CITY INC.
MINNEAPOLIS, MN

"Pride in the City" YouthBuild Program in Minneapolis is a collaborative effort between The City, Inc., a non-profit youth service agency, and Project for Pride in Living, a non-profit housing development agency. The project leveraged over $200,000 of private, public, and in-kind funds in addition to the $106,000 grant received from the Department of Economic Security.

EDUCATION

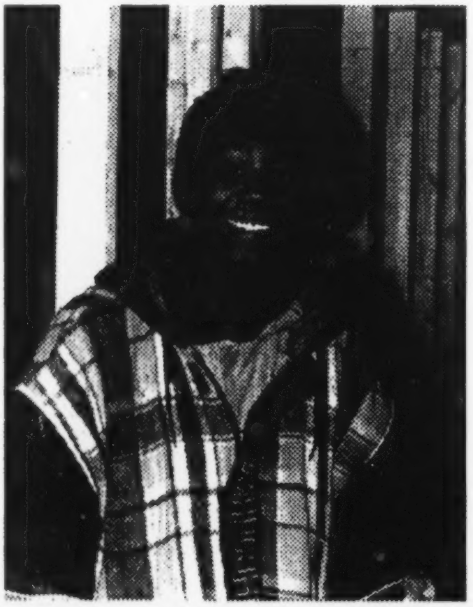
Each student enrolled in The City School, an accredited alternative learning center, spends a minimum of five hours each day in classroom instruction. Teacher-student ratios of 1 to 11, in addition to teacher aides, allow for individualized instruction year round. The curriculum emphasizes basic skill acquisition in Math and English, problem solving, leadership development and a community building mission.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Under the supervision of three journeyman carpenters, participants spend 15 hours a week gaining specific construction skills training in basic carpentry as well as job readiness, job placement, and job keeping skills. Elective credit and $150 stipends are earned every six weeks for 80 percent attendance or better, gaining building trades skills and work-related behaviors.

LEADERSHIP/SUPPORT SERVICES

Leadership training is developed through cultural activities and field trips. All City School students have access to the on-site services of job placement, career counseling, individual and group therapy, legal advocacy, recreation and drop-in center programming, after care and day treatment programs, on-site day care and parenting services. Parental involvement is also emphasized in the program. Last year, 95 percent of all parents attended parent-teacher conferences at The City School.



HOUSING

During 1994, Pride in the City students renovated a duplex, a community room at Project for Pride in Living, and a six unit housing project sponsored by St. Joseph's Hope Community.

CARVER-SCOTT EDUCATIONAL COOPERATIVE CHASKA, MN

Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative operates the Minnesota YouthBuild Program in collaboration with Scott-Carver-Dakota Community Action Agency and the Scott and Carver County Employment and Training. The project leveraged over $200,000 in private, public, and non-profit funds in addition to the $146,666 grant it received from the Department of Economic Security. In 1990 and 1991, the Carver-Scott Education Cooperative was selected as a Department of Education model for applied skills curriculum and outcome based education.

EDUCATION

Each student spends approximately 30 hours each in pre-employment and job readiness workshops, and pre-construction training. The curriculum emphasizes applied math and reading skills. Last year, participants averaged a 54 percent increase from pre- to post test scores on math skills applied to daily work situations.

WORK EXPERIENCE

A certified vocational instructor provides specific construction skills training to youth on the work site. Each young person receives work experience training that includes problem solving seminars, job readiness, job search, and job application. Students are involved from start to finish on each project, enabling them to experience first hand, all facets of housing construction. Participants earn $4.25 an hour in the summer, with a $1.00 per hour bonus for 95% attendance, and receive vocational credit which is accepted at Hennepin Technical College.

"Since this is my first time working in a hands-on program. I've learned that it takes a lot of commitment to build a house." - James St. Clair

LEADERSHIP/SUPPORT SERVICES

The program utilizes peer mentoring in both the classroom and work site. Case management is provided jointly by the project coordinator and JTPA youth worker who assist in developing an Individualized Success Plan with each participant.

HOUSING

During 1994, participants completed new construction on a two-unit battered women's house in the city of Jordan and began construction on a second battered women's house to be located in Prior Lake. Their next project will include the conversion of an abandoned farm house and out buildings in Waconia into an education center for students.

TWO OR MORE, INC.
MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Two or More, Inc., a non profit agency with the mission to work with inner city youth, operates the YouthBuild program in Minneapolis in collaboration with the Plymouth Christian Youth Center, William D. Pierce and Associates, the Northside Residents Redevelopment Corporation, Glenwood-Lyndale Community Center and Phyllis Wheately Community Center. The project leveraged over $300,000 of private, public, and foundation funds in addition to a $100,000 grant from the Department of Economic Security.

"I love it. YouthBuild has shown me that life is more than being 'in the streets'."
- Yohance Moore

EDUCATION

Students are grouped based upon their individual academic plan. On a bi-weekly basis, all students are in classes working toward their high school diploma, GED, or improving core workplace competencies in applied construction math and reading comprehension. The curriculum also emphasizes job readiness, life management skills and career planning.

WORK EXPERIENCE

On the worksite, two Journey Level carpenters provide an average of 20 hours a week of construction skills training, use of tools, safety principles and teamwork. Participants are a paid a training wage of $5.50 to $7.50 an hour during their eighteen months in the program.

LEADERSHIP/SUPPORT SERVICES

As members of the Youth Advisory Council, participants make decisions on disciplinary actions, hiring of staff, conflict resolution, project improvements and evaluation. Students are also required to participate in selected individual or group community service projects in the surrounding community. A career counselor assists youth with support services and works with them in setting future education and employment objectives.

HOUSING

Two or More participants have completed renovation of five single family homes in Minneapolis and the construction of four garages since last spring. Next year, participants plan to renovate 140 very low income housing units at the Plymouth Avenue Townhomes in north Minneapolis.

CITY ACADEMY
SAINT PAUL, MN

City Academy, the nation's first charter school, operates the YouthBuild Program in collaboration with Northern States Power Company (NSP), the City of St. Paul Planning and Economic Development Agency, and the East Side Neighborhood Community Development Corporation (ESNDC). The project leveraged $400,000 of private, public, and in-kind funds in addition to a $50,000 grant from the Department of Economic Security. City Academy serves 100 percent dropout youth who have left or been expelled from school.

EDUCATION

City Academy students spend 30 hours a week in the classroom with teacher-student ratios of 1 to 5. Internships with NSP and the city of St. Paul provide students hands-on learning in the business world. The curriculum includes all facets of the construction industry: market research, site selection, negotiations with city agencies, financing, mortgage underwriting, marketing processes and property management techniques. In June of 1994, City Academy presented 21 young adults with their diplomas. Fifteen have confirmed plans for post-secondary education at technical and private colleges.

"The construction has taught me to work with people, to understand them, and have them understand me." - Norman Newland

WORK EXPERIENCE

A construction trades specialist who is also a teacher at City Academy provides construction skills training to participants approximately 15 hours a week at the worksite. In addition, participants attend job readiness classes that emphasize work related behaviors such as punctuality, regular attendance, and working cooperatively.

LEADERSHIP/SUPPORT SERVICES

As advisory board members, students are involved in the actual planning and evaluation of the construction projects, including making public presentations to the city council, selecting project sites, and petitioning city offices to obtain site approval and control. Students also participate in civic and cultural activities. Case management and counseling is provided by City Academy staff and a school psychologist who assists youth in personal, academic, and job areas.

HOUSING

In 1994, students renovated six properties on the lower eastside of St. Paul to provide affordable housing to approximately twenty low income tenants.

RURAL MINNESOTA CEP, INC.
DETROIT LAKES, MN

Rural MN CEP, Inc. operates the Minnesota YouthBuild Program in collaboration with the Otter Tail-Wadena Community Action Council, West Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, Region IV Council on Domestic Violence, and Habitat for Humanity. The project leveraged $75,000 of private, public, and non-profit funds in addition to a $50,000 grant from the Department of Economic Security.

EDUCATION

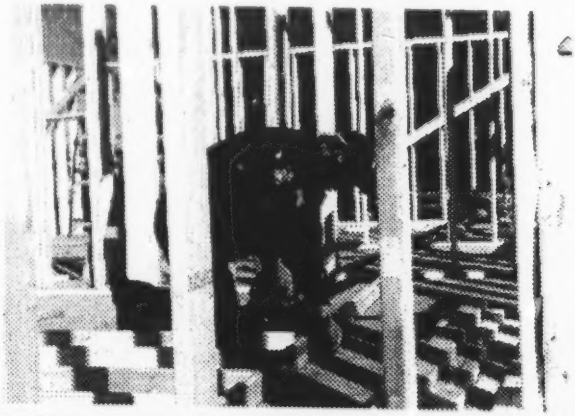
Each student pursues their high school diploma at the Perham Alternative School. The school provides courses in math, English, social studies, science, business, personal and family science, work relations, and career decisions. In addition, job search and job readiness classes are provided by Rural MN CEP, Inc. The classroom maintains a teacher-student ratio of 1 to 5 and academic credit is earned for every 170 hours of instruction.

WORK EXPERIENCE

A construction trades specialist provides skill training to two crews of youth. Each young person spends approximately half of each day in work experience training at the job site. Participants earn $4.25 an hour for training on the work site.

LEADERSHIP/SUPPORT SERVICES

Participants rotate as crew leaders and plan recreational activities. As members of the project advisory committee, participants also assist in making project decisions and evaluating program outcomes. A CEP employment counselor conducts individual assessments, initiates progress meetings with students, and assists students with services such as child care, family or legal emergencies, and personal counseling.



HOUSING

Rural MN CEP, Inc. participants have built three single family homes in Perham and Wadena which will provide affordable homeownership for three low income families selected through Habitat for Humanity applications.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES

Total Number of Participants 226

Gender

Male	74%
Female	26%

Age

16-17	74%
18-19	14%
20-24	12%

Race/Ethnicity

African American	24%
Native American	22%
Hispanic	8%
Asian American	1%
White	45%

At-Risk Indicators

Left School or Expelled	70%
Adult or Juvenile Offender	65%
Pregnant or Parenting Teen	20%
Disabled	54%
Foster Child	10%
From Single Parent Family	63%
Economically Disadvantaged	74%
Average Annual Household Income	$6,865

Program Activity

Basic Education Training	100%
Work Experience Training	100%
Job Readiness and Job Search Training	100%
Leadership Training	100%

Program Outcomes

Successfully Completed Program and its Objectives	84%
Received High School or Vo-Tech Credit	84%
Completed High School or Obtained GED	65%
Enrolled in Post-Secondary Institution or Vo-Tech	30%
Entered Employment	60%
Entered the Building Trades Profession	10%
Average Wage of Unsubsidized Employment	$7.02

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE MINNESOTA YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM CONTACT:

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St. Paul, Minnesota 55101
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Upon request, this report is available in alternate formats such as audio, braille or computer disk.

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